

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates

*Opinion Research &
Public Policy Analysis*

TO: Union of Concerned Scientists

FROM: David Metz and Molly O'Shaughnessy
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates

RE: Summary of Recent Statewide Voter Survey

DATE: March 8, 2006

Last month, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (FMM&A) completed a statewide survey of California voters to assess their attitudes on a variety of issues related to conservation, alternative fuels, and proposals to reduce our dependence on oil.¹ **The survey results show that a strong 60 percent majority of voters support the Clean Car Discount Program, with 33 percent opposed and 7 percent undecided.** When the components of the program are tested separately among other policy proposals, rebates draw stronger support than fees, but 62 percent of voters support the idea of charging fees on the purchase of new SUVs and other “dirty” cars.

Support for the Clean Car Discount Program varies little when voters are presented with different maximum amounts for the fees and rebates. In addition, support for the program is broad, cutting across most demographic groups in the state. When voters were asked in a separate set of questions about factors in deciding whether to purchase or drive an alternative fuel car, reliability was rated the most important factor.

The balance of this memo details these and other specific findings of the survey.

¹ **Research Methodology:** From February 15-20, 2006, FMM&A completed telephone interviews with 700 registered California voters who are likely to cast ballots in the November 2006 general election. The full sample has a margin of sampling error of +/-3.7%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be higher.

2425 Colorado Ave. Suite 180
Santa Monica, CA 90404
Phone: (310) 828-1183
Fax: (310) 453-6562

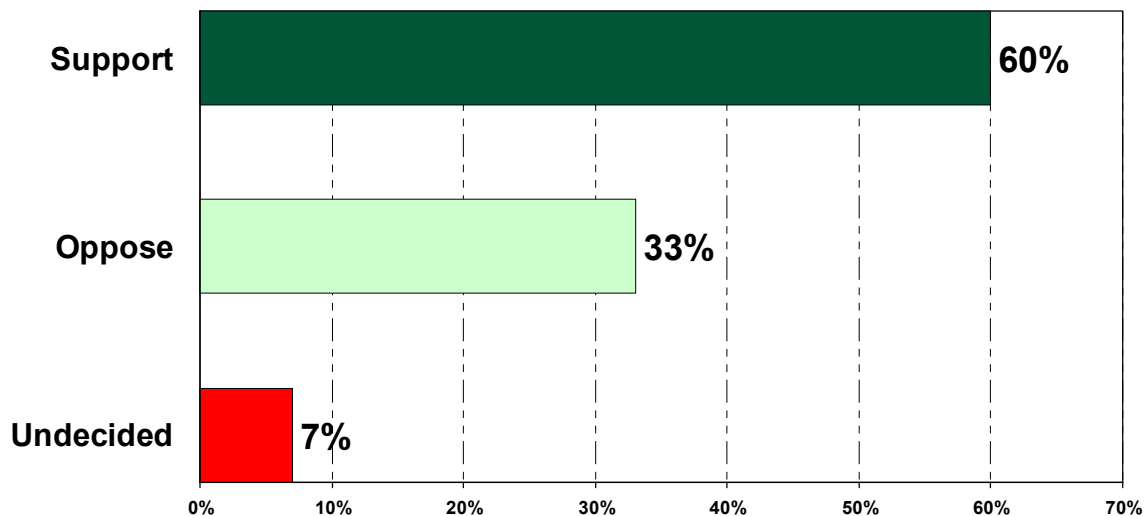
1999 Harrison Street Suite 1290
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: (510) 451-9521
Fax: (510) 451-0384

- ✓ **Voters strongly support the Clean Car Discount Program.** Survey respondents were offered the following brief description of the Clean Car Discount Program:

“Now I’d like to ask you about another policy that has been proposed. The California Clean Car Discount Program would give a rating to all new cars according to their impact on air pollution and global warming. Consumers who buy high-rated, or cleaner, cars would get a one-time rebate. Consumers who buy low-rated, or dirtier, cars, would pay a one-time surcharge. Consumers who buy cars with middle ratings would neither pay a surcharge nor receive a rebate. The rebate or surcharge would range from \$200 to \$2500, depending on the rating, but the fees and rebates would be designed so that the program would pay for itself. Would you support or oppose such a program?”

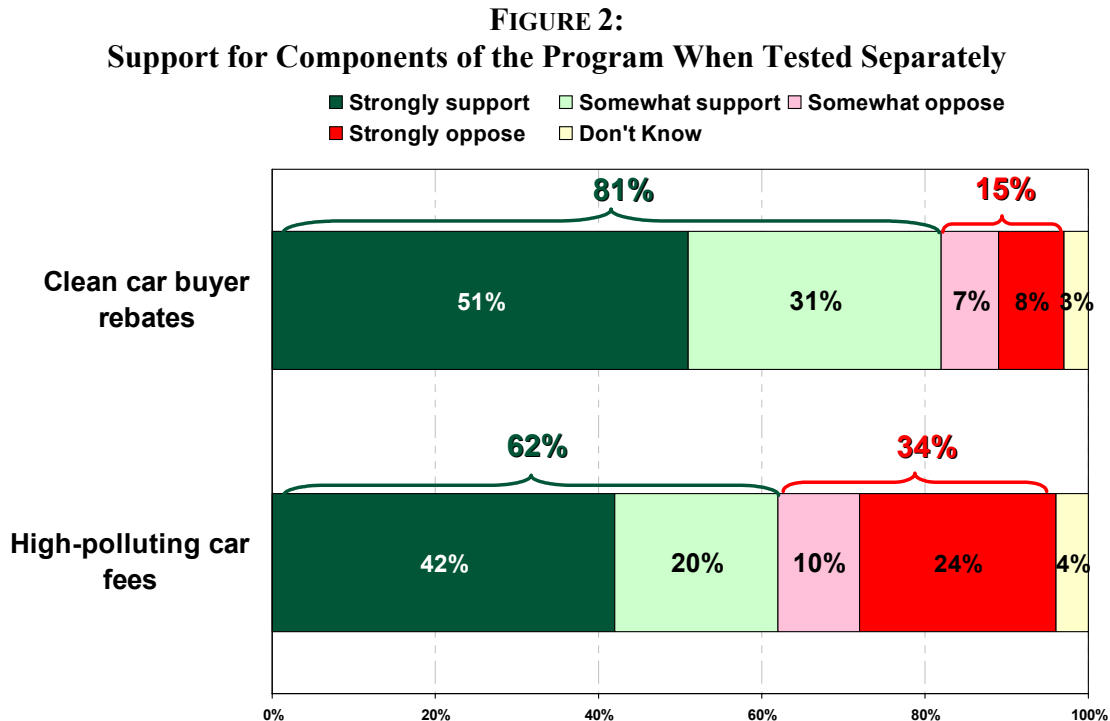
As shown in **Figure 1** below, when given this language a 60 percent majority of voters support the program, with 33 percent opposed and 7 percent undecided.

FIGURE 1:
Support for the Clean Car Discount Program



- ✓ **Support for rebates is stronger than support for fees, but a majority of voters support charging fees for new purchases of “dirty” cars even without the rebates.** Earlier in the survey, voters were given a list of policy proposals relating to alternative fuels, energy conservation and reducing dependence on oil, and asked whether they supported or opposed each one. In a split sample, half of the respondents were asked about “giving rebates to people who purchase new, very clean cars or cars that use alternative fuels” and half were asked about “charging a fee on new SUVs and other vehicles that emit a large amount of global warming pollution.” Not surprisingly, support for rebates is stronger than support for fees. Eight in ten voters support the proposal to provide rebates

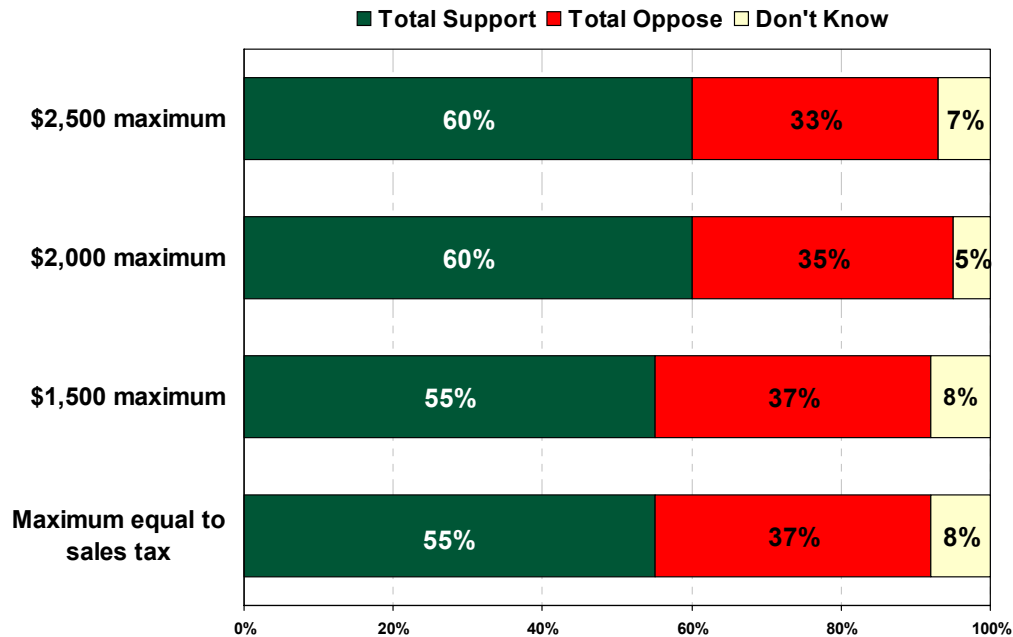
to buyers of new clean cars. While support for the idea of charging fees on the purchase of new, more polluting cars is lower, that support is still strong at a 62 percent majority of voters. See **Figure 2** on the following page for details on voter support for rebates and fees.



- ✓ **Support for the Clean Car Discount Program varies little when voters are presented with different maximum amounts for the fees and rebates.** Respondents were given alternate amounts for the maximum fee and rebate and asked whether they would support the program at that maximum. Support did not change when the maximum was reduced to \$2,000, but dropped five points to 55 percent at a maximum of \$1,500 and remained at 55 percent when voters were asked about a maximum fee or rebate equal to the sales tax on the vehicle. See **Figure 3** on the following page for overall support for the program at different maximum fees/rebates.

The relatively small change in support at lower amounts may result from an offsetting effect between voters who see themselves receiving rebates and voters who imagine being charged fees under the program. Support for the program among SUV and truck owners increases somewhat at the lower fee amounts, while support declines among compact and sedan owners as the maximum rebate is decreased. It should be noted that the decline in support among compact car owners, who also make up a larger portion of the electorate, is larger than the increase in support among SUV owners.

FIGURE 3:
Support for Clean Car Discount Program as Fees/Rebates Vary



- ✓ **Support for the program is broad, cutting across most demographic groups in the state.** As illustrated in **Figure 4** below, the Clean Car Discount Program is supported by six in ten California voters. The program's strongest supporters include Democrats, particularly liberal Democrats, Latino voters, Los Angeles County voters, self-identified environmentalists, and voters who drive compact cars or sedans.

FIGURE 4:
Support for Clean Car Discount Program Among Demographic Subgroups

DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP	Total Support	Total Oppose	Undecided
Overall results	60%	33%	7%
Party Registration			
Democrat	70%	23%	7%
Independent	57%	34%	9%
Republican	50%	43%	7%
Party by Ideology			
Liberal Democrats	81%	14%	5%
Moderate/Conservative Democrats	64%	28%	8%
Liberal/Moderate Republicans	68%	23%	9%
Conservative Republicans	42%	51%	7%

DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP	Total Support	Total Oppose	Undecided
Moderate Democratic Caucus Districts	54%	43%	3%
Region			
LA County	68%	24%	8%
Bay Area	61%	30%	9%
San Diego	62%	30%	8%
Coastal v. Inland Counties			
Coastal	64%	29%	7%
Inland	52%	42%	6%
Ethnicity			
Latino	71%	25%	4%
White	60%	34%	6%
African American	58%	22%	20%
Income			
Under \$60,000	65%	28%	7%
\$60,000-\$90,000	62%	33%	5%
\$90,000 and over	56%	41%	3%
Environmental self-ID			
Environmentalist	67%	26%	7%
Not an environmentalist	49%	43%	8%
Type of Car			
Compact or Sedan	68%	25%	7%
Truck or SUV	46%	47%	7%

- ✓ **Reliability is the most important factor for voters in deciding whether to purchase or drive an alternative fuel car.** In a separate question, respondents were given a list of factors and asked to rate the importance of each one in the decision whether to drive an alternative fuel car. As illustrated in **Figure 5** on the following page, reliability received the highest rating, and was rated as more important than fuel efficiency, reducing air pollution, or reducing our dependence on oil. However, three in four voters consider the fuel efficiency to be an extremely or very important factor, and seven in ten rate reducing our dependence on oil as extremely or very important.

FIGURE 5:
Factors in Alternative Fuel Car Purchase Decision

Factor	Total Ext. / Very Important	Extremely Important	Very Important
Reliability	87%	37%	50%
Fuel efficiency or gas mileage	75%	29%	46%
The convenience of re-fueling	71%	27%	44%
The reduction in our dependence on foreign oil	70%	34%	36%
The cost of maintenance or repairs	69%	29%	40%
Performance	65%	26%	39%
The purchase price	62%	30%	32%
The reduction in air pollution	61%	27%	34%
Environmental protection	56%	25%	31%
The reduction in global warming pollution	54%	25%	29%